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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/799,449	03/12/2004	Richard T. Bouche	BOUC0002	6238

7590 06/19/2006
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EXAMINER

PATTERSON, MARIE D

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3728

DATE MAILED: 06/19/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/799,449

Applicant(s)

BOUCHE ET AL.

Examiner

Marie Patterson

Art Unit

3728

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 18 May 2006.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-42 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 19-26 and 29-38 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-18, 27, 28, and 39-42 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

1. Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 9 is functional, indefinite, and incomplete because they recite solely functions and do not recite and further structures and therefore they do not further limit the previous claims and it is not clear what additional structural limitations applicant intends to encompass with such language.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

3. Claims 1-18, 27, 28, and 39-42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Sutherland (4753229), see figure 2.
4. Claims 1-5, 7-14, 16, 17, 27, 28, and 39-42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Johnston (1666290).

Allowable Subject Matter

5. Claims 19-26, and 29-38 are allowed.9-41

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments filed 5/18/06 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

In response to applicants' arguments directed towards the rejections based on Sutherland and/or Johnston, both Sutherland and/or Johnston do show all positively recited structural elements/limitations claimed. It is elementary that the mere recitation of a newly discovered function or property, inherently possessed by things in the prior art, does not cause a claim drawn to distinguish over the prior art. Additionally, where the Patent Office has reason to believe that a functional limitation asserted to be critical for establishing novelty in the claimed subject matter may, in fact, be an inherent characteristic of the prior art, it possesses the authority to require the applicant to prove that the subject matter shown to be in the prior art does not possess the characteristic relied on. In re Swinehart, 169 USPQ 226 (CCPA1971). The bands of Sutherland and/or Johnston do support and stabilize the foot and joints when the foot is in the plantarflexed position as claimed to some degree. The bands of either Sutherland and/or Johnston clearly are "capable" of the recited functions dependent on the amount of tensions, the specific arrangement a user decides on employing when wearing the device, etc., i.e. the structure of "capable" straps/bands and support foundations are present in both Sutherland and/or Johnston. The claims must structurally define over the structures shown by prior art. In this case, applicant is relying upon intended functional use and not in structural differences for patentability. Applicant has not positively defined and provided structural limitations in the claim of sufficient structure to define over the structures shown by the prior art.

In response to applicants' arguments directed towards the location of the straps of Sutherland and/or Johnston, clearly shows bands which are located in front of, behind, and directly over the ankle joint as shown in the figures.

In response to applicants' arguments directed towards Johnston and/or Sutherland; in reference to new claims 39-42, the frontmost bands of Johnston and Sutherland do form an acute angle and extend from the support band as claimed and the central bands are attached to the support band and extend at a right angle as claimed.

Response to Amendment

7. The Declaration under 37 CFR 1.132 filed 5/18/06 is insufficient to overcome the rejection of claims based upon Johnston or Sutherland as set forth in the last Office action because: The Declaration is directed towards a method of use and/or limitations as to the exact location of the straps which are limitations which are not explicitly expressed in the article claims.

8. The Declaration under 37 CFR 1.132 filed 5/18/06 is sufficient to overcome the rejection of claims 19-26 and 29-38 based upon the applied prior art.

Conclusion

9. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

1. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). Other useful information can be obtained at the PTO Home Page at www.uspto.gov.

In order to avoid potential delays, Technology Center 3700 is encouraging FAXing of responses to Office Actions directly into the Center at (572)272-8300 (**FORMAL FAXES ONLY**). Please identify Examiner Marie Patterson of Art Unit 3728 at the top of your cover sheet.

Any inquiry concerning the MERITS of this examination from the examiner should be directed to Marie Patterson whose telephone number is (571) 272-4559. The examiner can normally be reached from 6AM - 4PM Mon-Wed.



Marie Patterson
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3728